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CLAIMS

- SAC* *C2*
1. A method for detecting a de-myelinating disease or spongiform encephalopathy in mammals which comprises testing a biological sample obtained from the mammal for IgA antibodies which bind to an *Acinetobacter* antigen.
- A* *SC* *C*
2. A method according to claim 1, in which the *Acinetobacter* is one which presents to the mammal an antigen which exhibits molecular mimicry with the myelin of the mammal.
- A* *SC* *C*
3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, in which the antibodies are indicative of prior infection by *Acinetobacter calcoaceticus*.
- A*
4. A method according to claim 1, 2, or 3, in which the antibodies tested for are antibodies which bind to an epitope present in or derived from the *Acinetobacter* species or to a prepared peptide sequence corresponding thereto.
- Sub* *B2* *X*
5. A method according to any of claims 1 to 4, in which the disease tested for is bovine spongiform encephalopathy.
- X*
6. A method according to any of claims 1 to 4, in which the disease tested for is multiple sclerosis in humans.
- X*
7. A method according to any of claims 1 to 4, in which the disease tested for is Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease in humans.

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Claim 1

8. A method according to ~~any of the preceding claims~~ in which antibodies are assayed and a positive result is indicated by levels of antibodies at least about two standard deviations above that of control samples.

Claim 1

9. A test kit for use with a method according to ~~any of claims 1 to 8~~, in which the test antigen is the whole *Acinetobacter* organism or at least one prepared peptide sequence corresponding to an *Acinetobacter* epitope, said test kit including a secondary antibody against the human, bovine, or other mammalian IgA.

10. A method according to ~~claim 1, 2, or 3~~, in which the antibodies tested for are antibodies which bind to a peptide sequence conformationally similar to an *Acinetobacter* epitope.

11. A method according to claim 10, in which the epitope is the peptide sequence ISRAFWGEV.

12. A method according to claim 10, in which the epitope contains the peptide sequence RFSAWGAE.

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13. A test kit for use with a method according to ~~claim 10, 11, or 12~~, in which the test antigen is a peptide sequence which is conformationally sufficiently similar to an *Acinetobacter* epitope to bind to the relevant antibodies, said test kit including a secondary antibody against the human, bovine, or other mammalian IgA.

Sub
B3
a

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Sub B3 14. A test kit according to claim 13, comprising a peptide having the sequence RFSAWGAE or ISRFAWGEV.

a 15. A test kit according to claim 9, ~~or according to claim 13 or 14~~, in which the secondary antibody is a rabbit anti-human IgA or rabbit anti-bovine IgA.

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